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Introducing the Reynolds Family Transcript

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Clarence & Elva Reynolds Chair: Introducing the Reynolds Family

I'm Bert Coolidge, a graduate of Southern Adventist University. In 1965, it was Southern Missionary College. I've had the opportunity to teach here in the School of Business in 1991 through 2002, have been the Alumni president in 2013 and 2015. A number of my family have been involved in Southern. We certainly think a lot of it, are pleased with what's happened, and certainly hope to make it even better in the future. This Chair is named for Clarence and Elva Reynolds, was donated by the estate of their daughter Maurine, their only child. Maurine and her family lived most of their lives in Greeneville, Tennessee. That's where I was born, where I was reared. Mr. Reynolds, at that time, was a representative of the PET Milk company, a company that's basic business was making canned and then evaporated milk. And there was a large facility there in Greeneville that he was the manager of, and later a manager over the entire region, which had some other facilities. Their daughter, Maurine, was a graduate of the local college near Greeneville, Tennessee. It was a Tusculum College and she got a degree in English. I don't know that I ever had a conversation as to what she planned to do with that particular degree, but I do know that shortly after graduating it, she had a major medical problem and contacted rheumatic fever, and the process of trying to get over that was an extended convalescence in Tacoma Hospital there in Greeneville, Tennessee. Well, Tacoma Hospital was the facility that my grandfather, a Doctor Leroy Coolidge, had started. An institution that, to the best of his ability, represented the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its mission. And by the time that Maurine had basically recovered from this illness, she had become a Seventh-day Adventist. Her family was Presbyterian. That illness did leave her with, to some degree, compromised, I think, heart condition but she was never an invalid. Though I don't know that she would have what we'd call a robust lifestyle. Thereafter that, she became an employee of Tacoma Hospital and worked there the rest of her employed life as an administrative associate. Her father, as we've mentioned, was with the PET Milk company and he was involved with it. Just for a moment, to comment on this industry, it was sort of a high-tech industry of a hundred plus years ago because it allowed the consumer to have access to pure milk without refrigeration, and it allowed farmers on small farms to be able to have a constant cash income stream from selling the milk, and they also did not have to have refrigeration that was necessary for class A dairy or milk that would be put in bottles. The process of condensing the milk, boiling it, took care of all of the known illnesses at that time. So it was an industry that really... great for consumers, great for the producers, and it made a real economic change to communities like those in upper East Tennessee which, at the time they moved there, most of them rural electrification was very at its infancy. The Reynolds family was from Kansas, south-central Kansas. Early on before he left there, one of his activities involvement, he was the treasurer of the local public school district, so he was always involved in other activities. As his career moved him about the country, they ended up in upper-central Pennsylvania, town of Wellsboro, where he managed the plant there before he came to Greeneville, Tennessee. And that's another little kind of interaction between their family and my family because Wellsburg was where Dr. Coolidge... that was his hometown. He grew up just south of town there. And so I don't know whether the Reynolds's and the Coolidge's were together in any kind of a social activity prior to Maurine's illness or not. I mean, in the small town of Greeneville, two families that were not native of the area would more than likely find some reason to possibly get together. What I can tell you is that Mr. Reynolds was a very successful businessman, and what he did for the PET Milk company in his own life and investments. His home was the first place I ever saw a Barron's magazine, which comes out weekly and it's for investing. And when I asked my dad about it, why, all he would say is, "Well, Mr. Reynolds has stocks," which later in life as a business professor, of course, interested me, but that may have been the first time I heard it because my dad didn't own stocks and my grandfather was building a hospital and he wasn't concerned with stocks. He was not a large man, physically. Very, very quiet personality, would

not have dominated any situation or a group of people in his behavior, but he exhibited, I think, all of the qualities that a successful person ought to have. He was not boisterous, but he had a quietness about him that I think probably said he's a man of substance and strength. His wife, well, the first thing I can tell you about her that I remember is she had this glorious set of white hair. And to put that in the maybe 2019 situation, not unlike Barbara Bush. They had a glorious set of white hair. She was an excellent hostess. When we would go to her place for a sit-down meal, it was done with all the class that I was acquainted with at that time. It had fine china, fine silverware, fine glassware, and was served in a very... well, it was a manner that my mother tried her best to get my manners up to speed for such an occasion. And over much of a lifetime, we were in their house on a regular basis. Maurine never married and she had a deep interest in young people. My brothers and I, I guess, would almost tell you she was as close to an aunt as we would have ever had. My dad had no siblings, so we didn't have a very large family and she was the go-to person if we needed a babysitter or whatever. We would go on picnics with her. You know, we went down to the Smokies a time or two. So she was very involved with us on a personal basis. She was very involved with a lot of the children in our Greeneville church by helping them go to our elementary school there that was part... the church school. How many people she assisted with their tuition payments I have no idea, but I know that she did that. Was she interested in what went on in church? Yes. I think she sang. We didn't have a choir, but I think she enjoyed singing. I think she may have assisted as the church treasurer, as assistant church treasurer, for some period of time. Well, I think the Reynolds family probably exemplified what almost any family would either like to have accomplished, or would have liked to have emulated. That would be the goal that they would want to be. They were representative citizens, they were fine Christian people, and they lived lives that were beyond reproach in any way that I'm aware of.

Clarence & Elva Reynolds Chair: Maurine Reynolds

Maurine Reynolds was the only child of Clarence and Elva Reynolds. She lived with her parents as long as they were alive. That was partly due to an illness that she had when she was...just after finishing college with an English degree. She had rheumatic fever, a debilitating illness that took time to try to recover from. She was a patient at Tacoma Hospital and Sanitarium there in Greeneville, Tennessee, and that was the facility that my grandfather had started. By the time that the illness had been controlled, she had become interested, in fact, had made the decision to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This was coming from a family that had Presbyterian roots. The illness, I think, left her with a, to some degree, compromised heart situation, though she was never an invalid. I don't know that she could do robust types of things, but she had a very active life. She was a couple years older than my parents, and because of the interaction of our families, we'd call her a very good friend. And for my two brothers and myself, I guess we would have to best define our situation or interaction with her as being, "Wow, what a great aunt to have," 'cause she took a great interest in us. She would do things with us and yeah, she'd send us presents on our birthday and Christmas. Who could complain about that? Maurine was active in the church in various positions. I can't name them all. I think she enjoyed singing, I think she may have been part of the church treasury situation, but the part that I know the most is that with many of the young people in the church, she was willing to help them with the tuition to go to the church school there in Greeneville. Her father's job and her level employment, without having other expenses and living in their house, gave them resources that I think were, you'd say were well above what a number of the people who were more native to that area had. It was not a wealthy community, and so they were better off than 95% of the folks around them, for sure. And she was generous in doing that. When she became an Adventist, I think she made a hundred percent commitment. She was interested in various projects that would bring other people to the Adventist denomination. I know over time she was helpful in supporting various

evangelists or TV programs or radio programs that developed over the 50s, 60s, and 70s. So she had certainly a deep involvement with the religion. Now, was she fun to be around? Yes. She was a very active person, she loved her cars. She had, the earliest one I can remember I think was a Ford, but in the early 50s, she had a Oldsmobile '88 with a rocket V8 engine in it. Then the time it took her to get from Greeneville down the Knoxville or over the mountains to Asheville would stand up with anybody else's time and beat most. So she could put her foot down in her car and speed along. She did drive her mother almost everywhere that her mother went. And so, I think in spite of possibly having what would be viewed as some negatives from her early illness and how that might have changed some of her opportunities or desires, I don't think you could in any way say she didn't live a useful, full life with involving herself in her church, her community, and with many others. So she was an interesting person. She had a deep appreciation for, I think, the benefits that she did have in life. And, of course, one of the things that led to what we're talking about today is that if there were funds left over at the end of her life, she wanted them to accomplish something. And just as an aside, most of the funds that were left over were from the trust her father set up for his wife and his daughter, and while they used it liberally, they didn't use it all.

Clarence & Elva Reynolds Chair: Healing & Faith

We're talking about the Reynolds family in Greeneville, Tennessee. Three people: Clarence, Elva, and their daughter, Maurine. The Reynolds's were out of central Kansas. I think they were people who certainly were of a religious involvement. At an early age, they were Presbyterians, to the best of my knowledge, and when their daughter, Maurine, became ill and was in the hospital in Greeneville, Tennessee, she was introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and it became something she wanted to join. Now, I don't know what discussions may have happened at that time, but certainly there was never any indication that either of her parents objected or presented any kind of hardships or things that would have made that decision uncomfortable. When Maurine did join the church, she did it 100% wholeheartedly. She was a person who read substantially, which not surprising being an English major. And I think she became well-versed in most of the core doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This probably couldn't be demonstrated by the fact that, at her death, there was a trunkload of cassette tapes that she had acquired. I think she listened to a large number of them, but in the 60s, 70s, and the 80s, the things known as cassette ministries that produced just literally tons of tapes by Adventist ministers, their sermons and various topics. And I don't think Maurine failed to ever buy, to skip a single one. I think she bought them all. So, you know, the Seventh-day Adventist Church became a core piece of her existence, and a piece of that was the Adventist education. And so, support of the church school and making the church school available to the young people in the church was a major focus of how she spent some of her resources. I don't know that she ever needed any resources from her father to do that, at that time. I think that was primarily from her earnings as someone who worked at the hospital. But she did help. And beyond the local church school, I have less knowledge of who she may have helped, but I know she helped some young people as they went away to academy, and it's quite likely that she helped one or two of those in a post-secondary environment, but I can't tell you who and how much. There was no halfway in what she did. She was close to meticulous in the things she did at work, I think, and she was completely committed to her church and to her parents and to the others who were her friends, and she, because of that, led a life that, for those of us who knew her, we were blessed by being within her frame of reference.

Clarence & Elva Reynolds Chair: Furthering God's Work

Well, in the mid 1980s, Maurine had lost her father who died several years earlier, had lost her mother. She was having increasing health problems herself and was working on the documents that would handle whatever remained from the family's assets, given there were no biological people involved, survivors that were in the discussion at all. What should she do, or what would be a focus of whatever remained, which depending on how her health progressed or deteriorated, that could have a major impact on what were the funds. So it was not totally known how many dollars would be available, but she wanted it to, quote, "Do something for the Lord, for the work, for the betterment of mankind." She had, on several occasions, expressed great interest in some of the evangelical outreach type programs that the Adventist Church had, whether they were TV ministries or radio ministries or evangelists that were doing in-front-of-live-audience types of things. And we used to kind of joke that whoever the last one she heard would be the one that she was most interested in helping. However, as we've already talked about, her father was a very successful businessman, an individual who never became a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a very fine Christian individual, but not a Seventh-day Adventist. And there was some reluctance on my part and some of the other people I talked to of saying these funds, which were primarily the remains of a trust he'd set up for his wife and his daughter, that they should go into just the direct evangelical types of activities. And so, in conversations with her I said, "You know, your family, by what they've done and their interests, there's a strong relationship between education and religion. You've been very charitable in who you've helped with tuition payments." And I said, "From my background, there's really a need to continue to make the case that the educational program that the Adventist Church has put together has value, ought to be promoted and, if possible, improved." And I said, "Having said that, I really have got some reservations about we're doing as good a job in thinking about these topics as we ought to." Now, this was taking place over 30 years ago in the mid 1980s, so whether it's exactly what the same situation today, or we'll let people judge that. But I said, "You know, you can make a gift to a educational institution, and they should be able to work on this topic and bring some improvement to it." For a moment, let's just talk about, in higher education, a Chair is a faculty position that may be named in honor of some major person because of their expertise in the field. It might be named for a person who came up with the resources, but it almost always is there to improve something that can't necessarily be funded just out of tuition dollars. So perhaps there's a topic that if you said, "Well, we'll get a professor with that interest," it still might not fit in one of the curricula programs you have, or it might not generate very many dollars based on tuitions being raised by students in the courses the person would teach, but it still could be a very vital area to the overall program. And I sort of view what we're trying to do here is that. We're really looking at the interaction of how our religion and our education combined facilitate, hopefully, improvements in both areas, but produce in an individual a life that is what a Christ-like life on this earth using the talent God has given us all to accomplish. And so, we structured this and did identify it as a resource that came from her parents. So it is the Clarence and Elva Reynolds Chair. And then a Chair of what? Well, maybe the simplest thing would be educational philosophy, but in some of the situations, at least in my opinion, within the Adventist Church environment, the word philosophy we get hung up on. And so, this one was structured a Chair of religion and values, and it was intentionally put in the School of Education as its locus because, again, from a doctrinal standpoint, and from Mr. Reynolds' standpoint, I didn't want it in a School of Theology, even though some people would say, "Well, those topics could come from that direction." I assume they could, but we wanted them from the religious perspective that could be produced within a School of Education, not from a doctrinal standpoint that might have been the focus from some other place. So the will was written that there would be this gift to Southern. Now, Maurine passed away in 1988, and it took a year or two for the estate to get settled and the trust resources to come to Southern. And then, at that time, Southern said, "Well, we'll let it grow to

the point where maybe we can have a single professor paid from it." Well, for better or for worse, the amount of money hasn't gotten to that level where it could take care of one professor's existence on campus. It has, over the last several years, been applied to a professor's remuneration as part of the package. Now, where do we go from here? Well, I think that's a debatable discussion that in 2019 ought to be continued, particularly within the faculty of the School of Education and the support of the administration of the university. What is the best way to look at what can be contributed through the Adventist education system? What are the pieces that could be strengthened, what are the pieces that could be brought together in some type of a maybe renewed or a different mixture that also would be useful? So it is a topic that I hope is not static, it is a topic that has relevance every day and every day into the future. So exactly how the School of Education will continue to use the monies, and what exactly some or multiple members of the faculty can contribute into this goal, I'm going to leave as an open topic. It is a resource that did not impact tuition cost, and therefore, should allow the school to do some things that might otherwise have been left undone. And so, that's what a Chair should do, that's what we hope this Chair does, and I think those accomplishments would serve the family well, would serve the Adventist Church well, serve Southern Adventist University well, and hopefully the good Lord would be pleased with it also.

Clarence & Elva Reynolds Chair: Hope for the Future

One of the books written on education from Ellen G. White talks about that the goal of education is to deal with a life of service, not only in this existence, but in a future existence. I have to assume that's why the Adventist Church has literally expended billions of dollars into a worldwide educational system. Now, I've already indicated that Mr. Reynolds was a fine Christian gentleman of the Presbyterian faith and not an Adventist, and that his daughter became an Adventist, and a very committed one, and wanted as many people as possible to be Adventists. Part of the goal is to have a funded resource here at Southern Adventist University that would assist in making those a, not only a possibility, but maybe a probability. And if we look at Adventist education, wow, we've got a lot of people who have experienced it, but we've also seen that a lot of people have made a decision that being an Adventist doesn't seem to matter as much as some of us would think. Maybe those people are still having good, Christian, fulfilling lives. I would hope so, and I'm certainly not going to be the judge that says who gets to heaven and who doesn't, but yet, from years of being an Adventist, I'm committed that that's a positive in living our lives here on this earth. And so, what was the goal out of a Chair of religion and values? To look at the issues here and see how are we bringing these things together, and are we doing it in a way that gives us the best results possible? Have we, without indoctrinating but educating, without controlling but in bringing about efforts to facilitate a good life, a useful life, have we brought all those together in the best mix possible? It's a discussion that's not ending. It always can be a contributing factor, and what I hope is that someone located in the School of Education will be given the time and some resources to be a participant in this ongoing debate on this campus, and maybe within our entire church structure. We need people who say, "Adventist education, Adventist belief structure can lead to lives of great success. Success in bringing about service to others, bringing about the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and leading to many who will enjoy, not only an abundant life here, but an eternity with Christ." What has transpired recently, to my knowledge, in the School of Education is that once the funds got to a point that they could be used, is that over the last half of a decade, maybe a year longer, some positive things have been put in place. Dean McCoy instituted a weekend in September in which he invited various departments here on this campus to be participants, present papers as to how they saw religion and values being part of what we wanted to accomplish, and each of those were well done. There was a monogram put out with the papers in them, and that's useful. And the recent dean, in her efforts to look at the various pieces of the School of

Education, has instituted, I think, a real vigorous discussion as to how the resources of the Chair can be used, and I certainly appreciate her efforts and applaud the discussion, and I'm looking forward to some behavior and some activities that as-yet may be undefined to me that will make the goals of the Chair something that's accomplished and well-received. So the future can be extremely benefited by this, and I'm looking forward to that. You know, my hope would be that Adventist education is a prime source of producing an abundant life. The Bible speaks that's possible. But we want an abundant life that's not only useful to those around us here, that brings character into play, but we want it to produce an individual that the Lord's going to enjoy living with for eternity, and you know, we'll enjoy it both with those around us. That's my goal for Adventist education, it's my goal that the Reynolds Chair can be, should be, will be a piece of solving and moving that forward.